The Torrent of Hell

A Composite
of
Four Sketches
by
Geo. D. Buchanan
1876

CALIFORNIA

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SYNOPSIS

1st Sketch—Red only of first four pages.
Statements are *positive.*

2nd " (More elaborate)—Red and black of first four pages.
Statements, *with a single exception*, are positive.

3rd " Red only of last four pages.
Statements *conditional.* But, while portraying an entirely different condition, leaves the first two sketches unchallenged.

4th " (More elaborate than 3rd)—Red and black of last four pages.

5th—(1st Coalescence)—Red entire.

6th—THE COMPOSITE—Read red and black entire.

This little COMPOSITE was not constructed synthetically as the above synopsis might be construed to indicate, but evolved in the mind in the concrete as if by inspiration. The analysis of it, many years after it was written, surprised even its author and was far more difficult for him than the production of it as a whole.

The consensus of criticism commends it and indicates that it ranks alone in literature as regards form and style.

The author presents it to his friends as a parable and regards it as one of his masterpieces.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

The Torrent of Hell

By George D. Buchanan

There is a place,
'Way down in human hearts,
—The source of crime—
Where passions reign supreme,
And judgment plays no part.

A little place it is;
And yet,
From thence there flows a stream;
Which broadens like a sea.

Along its shores are nettles,
Covered o'er
With specters of bright flowers,
Which, like the Rain-bow,
Fade as we approach,
Or lure a little further on.

But, wanderer, beware;
For
He who steps aside to pluck
What seem to him
Are
Pretty flowers,
Or linger 'mid their fragrant charms,
Finds them not real—
Their branches are delusions,
Their brilliancy a snare—
They are but poisonous thorns;
And,
If, perchance, the erring one
Who thus has stepped astray
Thinks e'er again of right and home,
Should he return,
He comes with torn and bleeding feet,
With scars, which e'en a Heaven
—Be there one—
Will never hide nor heal.

I look,
And, in my fancy,
I behold a nook;
A corner of existence,
Where all is vile and low.

A filthy, wretched place it is,
And
Toward it rolls this sea-like flood;
With certainty un-erring.

Nearer and nearer its surges go;
Aye,
Many have already reached it
And
Millions more are pressing on
With eager hearts,
Striving, with the other,
Each,
To be the first to enter in
And
Share its wretchedness and woe.

Though some deny,
And laugh with scorn,
That place is Hell.

Whether it lives after me,
Or with this body dies,
I know not;
—Neither do I need to care.

It is enough to know
I stand within its gates just now
And look around
On ruined souls about me
—Souls not dead,
Yet rotten—
While up from their decaying forms
There comes a stench to warn the young.
But they in turn,
Fall, withering like them,
By their side.

Those who would have us think them
Wise and good
Have said:
"There is a Hell beyond the grave
-A place, of all most miserable-
Whence pours this Hell of Earth
At death."

If this be true,
The wicked ones are gathering there
En masse;
And those who dare to disobey
Commandments given them by their God.

There are those who helped to build
The
Ancient castles, mounds and walls;
To pave the streets
And gild the domes
Of cities we dig up
And wonder at
For being made so long ago.

There, preachers, priests and elders are;
Together
With the wicked ones
O'er whom they spread their hands
At close of song,
And—mocking—ask their God to bless.

There, drunkards, reeling,
Go about the streets
In search of rum;
Their torture made the more intense
Because no rum is there.
But
In their search for sin and crime,
They find
The wrecks of those
Who stood behind the bar,
On Earth,
And =smiling=
Filled each glass for them.

There, hideous demons -tired of Hell-
In rage and envy,
Sink their fangs
Deep
Into the ones there justly damned;
Thus ever tearing fresh,
Those wounds made here on Earth
By treading thorns of sin.
And in their hellish riots,
'Mid anguish, pain and strife,
They roam and madly rant and rave
Forever and for evermore
Among the endless flames.

Sad, sad are the moanings,
Loud and deep,
Of the angry beings gathered there
—The wrecks of souls
Forever doomed
To live and die,
And die and live,
Amidst eternal torment.